



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY HUMAN RESOURCES COMMAND
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AHRC-MSL-B

27 February 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR Director of Military Personnel Management, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, 300 Army Pentagon, Room 1D435, Washington, DC 20310-0300

SUBJECT: CY07 Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Master Sergeant (MSG) Selection Board – Consolidated Issues After Action Report

1. General. The USAR AGR MSG Selection board identified the following issues as matters of concern during the selection process. While highlighting concerns, these issues do not disclose the internal working procedures of the selection board.

2. After Action Comments. The following issues are deemed relative and are organized into the following categories:

3. General Observations.

a. ISSUE: Promotion files are in poor condition.

(1) DISCUSSION: The board recognizes that our Army is manned with a preponderance of outstanding Soldiers. We all should be very proud of the quality, professionalism, and experience base that now exists within this cohort of outstanding Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs). However, the board was frustrated in that we as an institution have not done all we can to capture the performance and contributions of these outstanding Soldiers. The board found significant problems in the majority of board files reviewed. Specific problems with the Enlisted Record Briefs (ERBs), Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reports (NCOERs), supporting documentation and photos are provided below. The board believes that the current system is "too easy" not allowing and expecting our Soldiers to have more complete board files.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: That Soldiers understand the criticality of having complete files prior to the convening of the board and that the responsibility to ensure this occurs rests with the Soldier.

b. ISSUE: Department of the Army (DA) official photographs.

(1) DISCUSSION: Deficiencies on DA photographs can be categorized into three basic problem areas: a) absence of photograph; b) uniform deficiencies; and c) wearing of awards and badges without accompanying orders or citations. Board members found a disturbing number of files (17 percent) that did not contain a DA photograph or a letter to the President addressing the cause of the absent document. Looking closer at the assignment history, some Soldiers may not

have had the opportunity to take a photo because of deployments. The photo is a very important part of the total evaluation each Soldier needs and deserves from the board. However, the board believed that in the majority of cases, the Soldier was either apathetic or attempting to avoid presenting an unfavorable picture (literally) before the board. The board additionally found significant deficiencies on approximately 15 percent of the board file photographs. Deficiencies included violations of haircut, hairstyle, and moustache regulations; the improper placement of ribbons, awards and rank; currency (Staff Sergeant photos); and improper or poorly fitting uniforms. Finally, board members identified Soldiers wearing awards and badges (to include the Ranger Tab and the Bronze Star Medal), although award was neither annotated on the Enlisted Records Brief nor verified in the form of orders or certificates in the files.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: Reference the first deficiency noted above, we (the Chains of Command and Concern) must continue to emphasize the importance of ensuring the DA Photograph is updated in accordance with AR 640-30 and included in the board file (Soldier responsibility). Reference the second deficiency, Soldiers must understand the criticality of the picture in the board packet and ensure photographs are reviewed for accuracy before submission to HRC. Finally, it is the Soldier's responsibility to ensure that the board packet includes orders or citations for all awards or decorations worn by the Soldier in the DA photo.

c. ISSUE: Out of date physicals.

(1) DISCUSSION: The board estimates that approximately 20 percent of the files reviewed showed physicals that were out of date. Some Soldiers had physicals that were as much as 13 years old. While a percentage of these cases may be the result of either the Soldier or HRC personnel failing to properly update the ERB, we believe the majority of outdated physicals result from the Soldier failing to execute this requirement. The physical is very important from two perspectives. First, timely physicals may identify Soldiers with serious medical conditions earlier, thus increasing the likelihood for successful treatment. Secondly, as we continue to deploy forces at a significant rate, it becomes more important for the Army's leadership to have a true picture of the deployable status of the force as a whole.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: Soldiers' Chains of Command must ensure that tracking mechanisms are utilized and compliance is enforced. Army Knowledge On-line (AKO) offers a mechanism for doing this type of tracking.

d. ISSUE: Horizontal stagnation.

(1) DISCUSSION: The board identified a select group of Soldiers that appeared to have spent an inordinate period at the same duty location in the same job (in excess of 3-5 years). It is incumbent upon the Soldier and his/her Chain of Command to continue to develop and grow our leaders through expanded job opportunities.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: That Soldiers (and their Chain of Command) migrate into different duty positions (preferably to more challenging and demanding positions) at least every three years. HRC-St. Louis must take a more active role in career management.

e. ISSUE: NCOs quit excelling later in their careers.

(1) DISCUSSION: There appeared to be a significant number of NCOs that quit excelling in terms of military and civilian education. It is imperative that Soldiers continue to develop (self-development) throughout his or her career. The board understood that deployments prevent many Soldiers from pursuing these opportunities, however many of the Soldiers identified in this category were not deployed.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: That Soldiers continue to pursue military and/or civilian education opportunities throughout the term of their service.

f. ISSUE: Lack of awards and recognition for outstanding, long serving Soldiers and award citations that do not provide a good depiction of what the Soldier accomplished to merit the award.

(1) DISCUSSION: It is clear that the outstanding service and performance of many Noncommissioned Officers are not being recognized with appropriate awards. NCOs with long records of stellar performance may have an Army Achievement Medal as their highest award. Leaders must be more vigilant and committed to recognizing and rewarding superior performance. Additionally, the board found numerous supporting documents for awards that failed to provide any real justification for the award. This prevented the board from assessing the overall contribution of the Soldier and ‘lessened’ the impact of the award (when compared with better written, similar awards).

(2) RECOMMENDATION: Raters should ensure that supporting documentation clearly specifies the nature of the actions and contributions of the Soldier that merited the receipt of the award.

4. Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reports (NCOERs).

a. ISSUE: Quantifiable bullet comments on NCOERs.

(1) DISCUSSION: The board identified a disturbing trend of bullet comments not supportive of the performance block checked on the NCOER, and a significant number of cases where overall ratings are not supported by the bullet comments or performance block ratings. This negates the NCOER as a valuable developmental tool for the Soldier and as a true indicator of performance and potential for the board. The board found inconsistencies in Rater evaluations. Some raters will assign “3” or even “4” Success Ratings for performance and then

evaluate the Soldier as Among the Best. This sends a mixed message to the board. Inconsistencies in Senior Rater evaluations also were identified. Too many Senior Raters give a Soldier a “2” block (and in a few cases even a “3” block) for Performance and then give a “1” block for Potential. This sends a mixed message to the board. These are evaluations on senior noncommissioned officers who have been in the Army for a significant number of years. It is illogical to believe that their “potential for promotion and/or service in positions of greater responsibility” is greater than their most recent performance. The most useful NCOERs provided specific, objective comments about the NCO and not NCO missions and functions in general. Raters must be very specific (objective) and use the two line bullet format. Raters and senior raters must be totally honest. Not all NCOs can be among the best. Make the hard call.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: That raters, senior raters, and reviewers ensure that bullet comments and overall ratings are fully supportable/justified. Restrict comments like “Promote ahead of peers” to only those Soldiers demonstrating truly outstanding (quantifiable) performance and possessing superior potential.

b. ISSUE: Timely Issue of NCOERs.

(1) DISCUSSION: Many files have an “evaluation gap” in excess of 14-36 months from the date the board convenes to the close out date of the most current NCOER in the file. This lack of current assessment data negatively impacts the board’s ability to best assess ‘updated’ performance and potential. Even if the most recent NCOERs reflect outstanding performance, it is impossible to fairly evaluate the Soldier’s performance if the Soldier has not received an evaluation in the past 24 to 36 months.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: The Soldier, in concert with the Chain of Command, must monitor and expedite (if required) the preparation and processing of NCOERs in a timely manner to ensure the board is afforded the opportunity to assess the most current performance data available for our Soldiers.

c. ISSUE: Proofread NCOERs before submission.

(1) DISCUSSION: The NCOER is a critical component in the overall assessment by the board. Many of these documents contained erroneous lengths of reporting periods, grammatical and spelling errors, and other administrative errors that bring into question the validity of the assessment, as well as, fail to accurately paint a solid picture of the Soldier. One Senior Rater’s comment read: “Promote with a head of her peers.” While this comment certainly paints a picture, we do not believe it is the one intended by the senior rater.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: The Soldier, rater, senior rater, and reviewer all have a responsibility to ensure that the NCOER facilitates a true and accurate picture of the Soldier.

- d. ISSUE: Recognizing performance of Soldiers deployed/in a combat zone.

(1) DISCUSSION: NCOERs do not adequately address deployment(s). Photos, ERBs, and award certificates may reflect that a Soldier has deployed but there is no mention of or credit for deployment in a Soldier's NCOERs. Board members reported that it was easier to discern if a Soldier had been the key control custodian than if he or she had deployed to Iraq.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: Raters should ensure that participation in deployments/combat duty is clearly articulated on the NCOER. Ensure the duty description actually portrays what that Soldier was expected to accomplish, and bullet comments highlight participation in deployments and combat operations.

- e. ISSUE: Repetitive/sequential "profile" comments for APFT on NCOERs

(1) DISCUSSION: Reviewing NCOERs in sequential fashion identified Soldiers that had gone 3 or 4 years without taking an APFT. Further review of their ERB often showed these Soldiers with an out of date physical and a 'picket fence' PULHES.

(2) RECOMMENDATION: That raters, senior raters, and reviewers develop tracking mechanisms to ensure that our Soldiers are taking the semi-annual APFT or if injuries prevent them from participating, that the Soldier receives timely medical care to get them back into the fight.

5. ERBs. ISSUE: Inadequate maintenance and update of the ERB.

a. DISCUSSION: The ERB, if complete and accurate, is an outstanding tool that allows the board to quickly grasp the career progression overview of our Soldiers as well as assess factors such as ability to deploy (medical), military and civilian education and awards. If this document is not properly maintained or contains erroneous information, the board is hampered in accurately evaluating the Soldier. Of special concern is missing deployment information. An NCOER may reflect that the Soldier has deployed but the ERB is out of date and does not reflect this (the reverse of the problem addressed in the preceding paragraph).

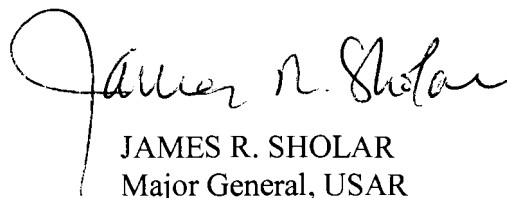
b. RECOMMENDATION: Maintenance of the ERB remains the primary responsibility of the Soldier. Timely submissions of updates to HRC-St Louis are not being made. Soldiers must understand that updating for next year's board should begin now. The Chain of Command should continue to stress the importance of this document through the counseling and mentorship programs across the force, as well as actively assist the Soldier in providing updated material or input if required.

6. Letters to the President of the Board. ISSUE: Purpose and content of the Letter to the President.

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a. DISCUSSION: The board identified several trends concerning Letters to the President of the Board. In some cases, Soldiers used the input correctly to provide the board relevant information that could not be integrated into the files in a timely basis through routine channels. In some cases, Soldiers used the letter to provide input that was not relevant to the board or could not be substantiated and therefore, was of little use to the board. Many Soldiers elected not to use this input mechanism and deprived the board the opportunity to fully assess the Soldier's performance and potential. Several letters were reviewed that contained multiple grammatical and or spelling errors.

b. RECOMMENDATION: The Soldier and their Chain of Command should be familiar with the guidance provided by the zone message and notification memorandum. Soldiers should only provide information consistent with the instructions. Letters should be direct and to the point. The Chain of Command should be available to assist the Soldier in determining if a letter is warranted. Additionally, recommend that the Soldier have someone else review the letter prior to submission.



JAMES R. SHOLAR
Major General, USAR
Board President